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### IN APPRECIATION OF OUR KOREAN WAR VETERANS

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, on July 27, 1953, our country signed an armistice agreement that ended the Korean War after 3 years of devastating combat. Yesterday marked the 50th anniversary of the war's end. Today I rise to honor the courage and sacrifice of the military veterans who fought this war and to proclaim that our country has not forgotten their service.

More than 1.8 million Americans fought on the front lines of our battle to defend freedom and democracy on the Korean Peninsula. They joined with allies from 21 different nations to ensure that the people of South Korea would not be ruled by the tyranny and oppression of communism. More than 36,500 soldiers committed the ultimate sacrifice in this effort, and another 103,000 Americans were wounded in some of the bloodiest and most traumatic fighting the world has ever seen.

Currently, around 12,000 veterans of the conflict live in South Dakota. They are now among the elder statesmen of our country's long lineage of heroism, true role models to our youth and an inspiration to those service members now fighting around the world against terrorism and brutal dictatorship.

On June 25, 1950, North Korean dictator Kim Il-Song sent 135,000 troops to invade South Korea. The international response was immediate, and President Truman sent troops to defend the South Koreans 2 days later. For more than 3 years, these troops fought to preserve the integrity of South Korea. But this conflict was not simply about protecting the sovereignty of one nation against the designs of its invader. Rather, the Korean War represented an epic struggle of two political ideologies: the democratic values of peace, freedom, and self-determination against a communist system based on tyranny and violence.

No less than the fate of the world was at stake on

the hills and plains of the Korean peninsula. With some of the century's most infamous tyrants Mao and Stalin backing the North Koreans and the world's beacon of democracy fighting alongside the South Koreans, this conflict could not have had higher stakes. Consequently, we future generations of Americans are deeply indebted to the veterans of the Korean War; it is to them we owe the preservation of our very way of life.

And yet, despite the significance of their achievement, these soldiers were never greeted with the type of homecoming befitting their heroism. A nation that, after World War II, was weary of war never fully grasped the enormity of the military's mission in Korea. Few returning troops were greeted with the ticker-tape parades and community celebrations that were common after World War II. The Korean War became the Forgotten War.

As our country honors the 50th anniversary of the Korean War, I say to America's veterans of this war, you are forgotten no more. Your legacy is our nation's prosperity, our continuing commitment to liberty and democracy. Your legacy is a thriving, democratic nation of 40 million souls on the southern half of the Korean Peninsula. With great personal sacrifice and tremendous dedication, you secured our future. And while we sometimes take our way of life for granted, the veterans of the Korean War remind us that, as their Korean War Commemoration Flag proclaims, "Freedom is not free." Without the dedicated service and sacrifice of the soldiers we celebrate in this, the Year of the Korean Veteran, our nation would not be able to enjoy the freedom and prosperity that we too often take for granted. So, on behalf of later generations of veterans, like myself, and on behalf of all the citizens of South Dakota and all Americans, thank you for your lasting contribution to our nation's greatness. You, the veterans of the Korean War, are true American heroes, and we salute you.